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Ed Dombroskas
Executive Director
Eastern Regional Tourism District

SB 282 An Act Concerning the Development of a Connecticut Antiques Trail

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, Senator Kane and members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Ed Dombroskas Executive Director of the Eastern Regional Tourism District known as "Mystic Country." Previously I served from 1991 to 2006 as the Executive Director of the Connecticut Office of Tourism and from 2001-2004 I was Chairman of the National Council of State Tourism Directors. I am here today to speak in favor of SB 282 An Act Concerning the Development of a Connecticut Antiques Trail.

Connecticut is fortunate to have so many diverse and interesting destinations where people can engage in leisure activities. Most are small businesses that rely on the existence of other supporting attractions and services to attract visitors and customers to their particular venue. I like to describe Connecticut as a quilt of interests that when stitched together form a vibrant and interesting tourism destination. Separately any particular piece may be interesting but not have the structure to really attract someone's interest.

With that in mind last year we in the Eastern Tourism District were trying to identify particular areas of interest that motivate people to come to Connecticut. One result of our effort was to create an Antiques Trail for Eastern Connecticut. By identifying all of the antique stores, outlets and venues in our area we were able to couple them with other attractions close by. Our bottom line was to give a potential visitor a reason to come then entice them to engage in other activities nearby. Essentially come, spend money then spend some more money on other items, have fun, return home and plan to come again.

We put our Antique Trail together into a printed brochure and posted it on our website. We then used social media and public relations to promote it. I can tell you that it resulted in thousands of direct inquiries seeking copies of the brochure and was mentioned in newspaper and magazine articles from California to Texas, Colorado, Florida and more. We continue to respond to people from all over the country.

As I mentioned earlier most tourism businesses are small. Antique businesses are very much small businesses and the work of putting our trail together required many hours of phone calls, visits and follow-up to determine accurate descriptions including locations, hours of operation and the type of business they conduct. Was it worth it? Did it increase travel? Do the visitors pay sales tax? The answer to all this is a resounding yes and the potential for more is here in SB 282.